

Featured Volunteer: Melissa Lovett

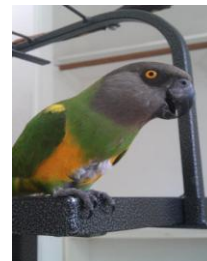
By Shauna Hill



Sometimes a seed takes time to take root and grow after being planted - but when it does, it sprouts into something very strong and vibrant. That's similar to how our latest featured volunteer's role came to grow within Mickaboo. She is Melissa Lovett from Modesto and although she can not recall how she first heard about Mickaboo, she knew she would look further into our organization if she ever decided to add a feathered companion to her life (she had no birds

at this time). Fast forward 5 years later to the fall of 2011 and a chance meeting with one of our Conure Team Coordinators (Priya Tuvell) and Priya's Meyers parrot (one of the first social birds Melissa had encountered) and the deal was sealed! Priya proved to be an in-house mentor and helped Melissa tremendously to take the plunge further into the world of birds. Melissa took the Basic Bird Care class in December with Priya as teacher in Tracy, and filled out a volunteer/foster application in January 2012.

Melissa grew up with animals - mostly dogs, cats, and livestock growing up in the country – and was involved in 4H and FFA. She also works with a dog/cat rescue group where she uses her positive reinforcement experience and training techniques to address behavioral issues. She had no real bird experience before Mickaboo, had only met unsocialized cockatiels and budgies, and had not interacted with them. While joining Mickaboo, Lui, a wild-caught Senegal parrot, entered Melissa's life. He came to Melissa in the middle of December 2011 after being imported and bounced around to many homes before ending up in his forever home with Melissa. He was a shy, fearful bird when she first met him. Over time and with a lot of love he has become more confident in himself and his surroundings and has gotten over his fearfulness. He loves ambient attention and Melissa's goal is to build an aviary where he can have the attention he wants and still be the bird he is. When looking for a friend for Lui, Tommy, a female Senegal, became Melissa's first Mickaboo foster and joined the Lovett home in April 2012. Tommy has done very well under foster care. As you can see from these pictures has regrown the feathers he had plucked before coming to Mickaboo:



March 2012



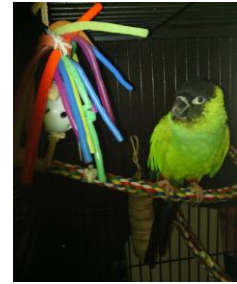
July 2012

Unfortunately these two did not become friends but the fostering led to Melissa's decision to help the Conure Team further. Melissa currently fosters conures (Guacamole, Izzy, Perci, Desi and Lucy), and a cockatiel named Fuzzy. Melissa also does home visits and phone screens in and around her lone outpost of Modesto. She is now also the Co-Coordinator with Annedore for the Conure Team.

When asked about her most memorable rescue experience, Melissa had three to share (all of which happened this year!), each one more dramatic and memorable than the one before. In her words:

The first is about Perci. A surrender request came in for a senior Patagonian. The picture showed a very obviously underweight plucked bird in a tiny cage. I brought him home and soon discovered he was more impaired and had more issues than I had understood.

The second came in as a phone call from someone local to me as people now know I foster for Mickaboo - four ex-breeder birds where the owner was just too old to physically take care of them. There ended up being six birds: Desi and Lucy (Patagonian Conures), Snowball (a Goffin's Cockatoo), Papa (an African Grey), and indoor "pet" birds Pumpkin (a Ringneck) and Bopper (a Nanday Conure).



Three weeks later with the help of all the involved species coordinators, especially Kerry Powell, we were able to get all the birds into foster homes.

The third and most recent was a Goffin's, MaiTai, and cockatiel Fuzzy. I worked with the surrenderer for three months to convince her surrendering was the kindest thing to do for birds since she could not afford the vet care so obviously needed.



We also asked Melissa why she thought others should consider volunteering for Mickaboo:

There is such an obvious unfulfilled need for rescue for all companion animals. My original goal was to find a friend for my current bird. Knowing he needed to choose his own friend, I decided to foster. As I became involved it was clear that there is always more to be done.

Whether you help out with your favorite species team or a species you have never met before or help with a task unattached to the birds--the need is great and the help is hugely appreciated by birds and people alike.

Melissa is a much valued member of the Conure Team and the whole Mickaboo family. We are very pleased to highlight her in this newsletter and hope you will join us in congratulating her on being our Featured Volunteer. Thank you Melissa for giving us an opportunity to get to know you a little better and for all you do for Mickaboo!